

Stracheya tibetica Benth. (Fabaceae), a little known legume from Himalaya

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Abstract

Stracheya tibetica Benth., a relatively little known legume from Himalaya is described and illustrated.

In the course of botanical exploration in Kashmir Himalaya (Ladakh), specimens of *Stracheya tibetica* Benth. were collected from Tangtse (ca. 4800 m altitude) on way to Chushul beyond Chang La and about 30 km east of Pongong Tzo. Although this species, with its curious pods, was reported to occur between Pangong (in Western Tibet) and Eastern Nepal (Baker in Hook. f., *Fl. Brit. India* 2: 147. 1876), scrutiny of the materials in different herbaria (K, CAL, BSD, DD) reveal that this species is poorly represented and is relatively little known. Therefore, a detailed description and illustration are provided here for its easy identification.

Stracheya tibetica Benth. in Hook., *J. Bot. Kew Gard. Misc.* 5: 307. 1853; Baker in Hook. f., *Fl. Brit. India* 2: 147. 186; Ali in Nasir & Ali, *Fl. W. Pakistan* Fasc. 100: 333. 1977; Grierson & Long, *Fl. Bhutan* 1: 723, f. 44t. 1987. Type: Tibet, Tisum, 15000 ft. *Stracheya & Winterbottom* s. n. (K!) (Figs. 1 & 2)

Acaulescent perennial herb or tufted low shrub, upto 70 cm high and 12 – 13 cm in diameter; rootstock woody. Leaves imparipinnate, 2–6 cm long; leaflets 10–12 pairs, ovate, elliptic or lanceolate, upto 1.5 x 0.5 cm, obtuse, entire with margins revolute, pilose, pink dotted on upper surface, petiolulate; stipules scarious, sheathing, villous. Flowers pinkish-purple or reddish, 1–5 in crowded axillary racemes; peduncles upto 2 cm long; bracts linear-lanceolate, 2–4 cm long, persistent. Calyx densely pubescent; lobes linear-lanceolate or subulate, 5–7 mm long, acute, 2 adaxial lobes longer; tube 2–3 mm broad. Corolla pinkish-purple, glabrous; standard 1.5–2 x 0.5–0.7 cm, narrowed at base, retuse at apex; wing petals falcate, oblong, 1.8 – 2 x 0.3–0.5 cm; keel petals obliquely truncate at apex, obtuse. Stamens diadelphous (9+1); staminal sheath 1.8 – 2 cm long. Ovary ca 2 mm long, 4-ovuled; styles 1.6–1.8 cm long, filiform, abruptly incurved towards tip; stigma minute, capitate. Pods 4-angled, oblong, up to 2 x 0.7 cm, curved, compressed with a row of broad teeth on each angle, transversely elevated-veins and muricate between angles, breaking transversely into 2–5 segments, finely appressed pubescent. Seeds reniform.

Stracheya tibetica Benth. from Himalaya

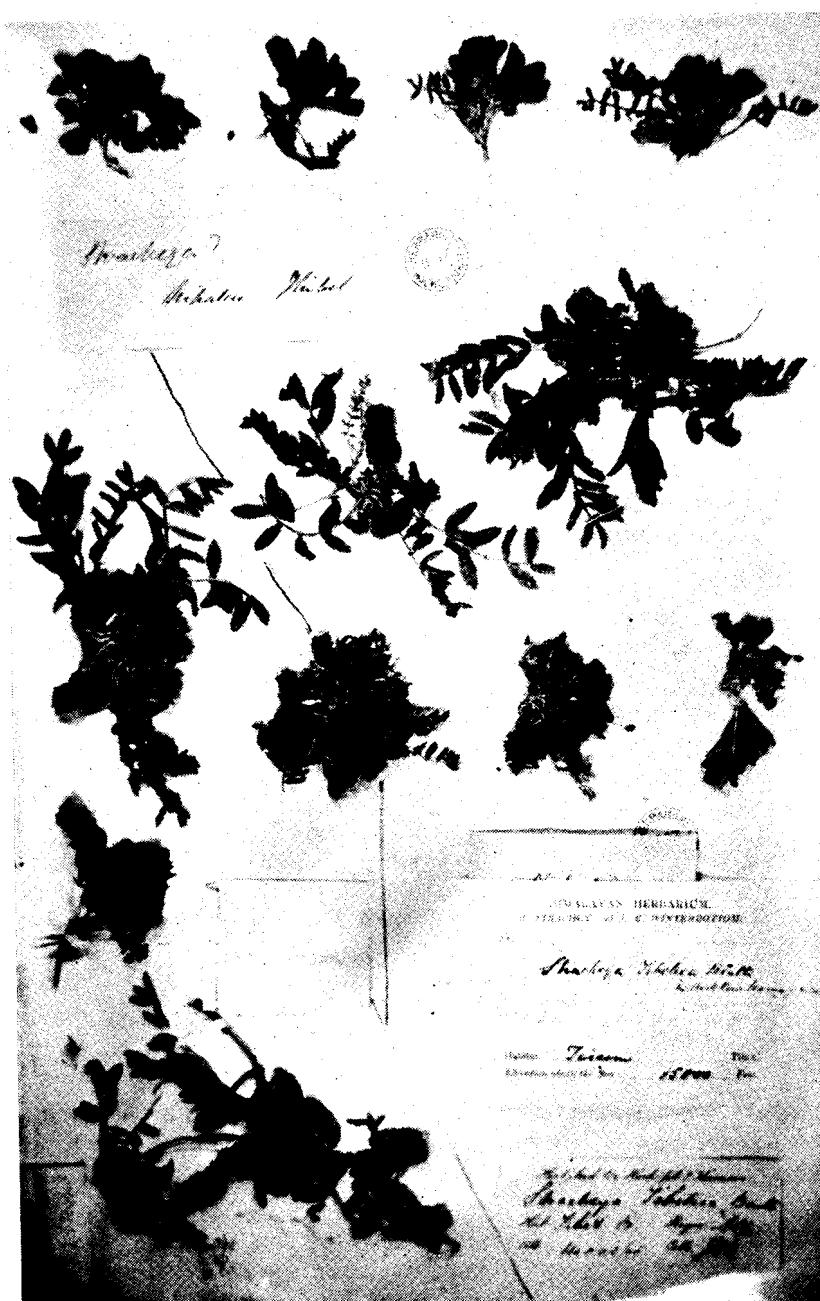


Fig. 1. *Stracheya tibetica*. Photograph of type specimens (K).

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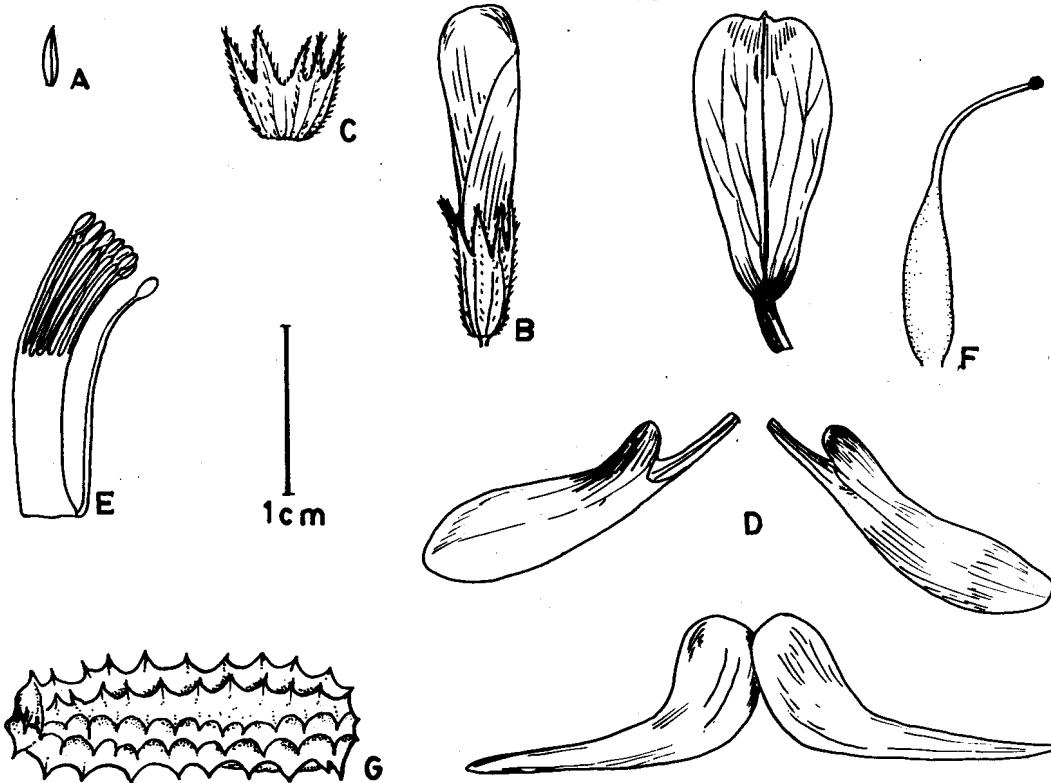


Fig. 2. *Stracheya tibetica*. A. Bract; B. Flower; C. Calyx; D. Corolla; E. Androecium; F. Pistil; G. Fruit.

Flowering: July — August.

Distribution: India (Temperate Himalayas from Kashmir to Sikkim), Nepal, Bhutan, China (Zizang Ziziqu).

Specimen examined: Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Tangtse, ca 4800 m, August 1975, Viswanathan 247817 (BSD).

Note: The genus *Stracheya* resembles astragloid *Hedysarum* species in general appearance and flowers and *Eversmannia* in unjointed pods but differs from the former in having toothed angles and unjointed pods.

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